

Agenda Item	A6
Application Number	25/00133/FUL
Proposal	Partially retrospective application for the change of use of 96-bed into 62 one-bed self contained student accommodation units, erection of a three storey front extension linking the Mill and annexe, erection of a cafe to rear and demolition of part of enclosure wall
Application site	Mill Hall Moor Lane Lancaster Lancashire
Applicant	Afar Properties Limited
Agent	Mr Thomas Zub
Case Officer	Mr Andrew Clement
Departure	No
Summary of Recommendation	Approve with conditions

1.0 Application Site and Setting

- 1.1 The site that forms the subject of this application is Mill Hall, a Grade II Listed Building located within the Lancaster Conservation Area, part of the Canal Corridor North Character Area. Mill Hall was built as a steam-powered worsted mill in 1819 by Thomas Higgin & Co. Thomas, subsequently operated by Greys of Styal and then Storey Brothers. The building was converted into a cotton spinning factory by 1828, and to student accommodation in 1988-89. This multistorey property has a dominating presence in the townscape, as one of several impressive mills in the area. The frontages of the older mills and factories generally have a uniformly consistent pattern, which emphasises their massing.
- 1.2 Industrial buildings such as the application site are particularly important to the character of this area of the Lancaster Conservation Area, and contribute positively to the designated national heritage asset area. The Mill walls are finished in battered squared coursed sandstone under a slate roof, with a rectangular plan along the canal with coped gables, the cap of a ventilation shaft at the southern apex, and with a truncated chimney stack against the north gable. The existing front Doric porch is understood to be a subsequent addition added by Charles B Pearson Son & Partners (Architects), with the roof slope containing 20th century rooflights. The stone wall on the approach to the canal bridge on the north side of Moor Lane adds historic interest to this frontage, with its distinctive coping and response to the change in level.
- 1.3 The smaller Block 2 part of this proposal is also a Grade II Listed Building, which was part of the cotton mill built for Storey Brothers circa 1880 and converted to student accommodation caretakers block in 1988. This 3-storey building is finished in squared coursed sandstone under a slate roof, with a central wagon entrance at ground floor level providing access to a rear courtyard area. The rear wall has a central 1st-floor bay of timber and glass with an iron crane. These Grade II Listed Buildings make a positive contribution to the setting of further Grade II Listed Mill buildings to the

south side of Moor Lane, and non-designated heritage asset buildings in the surrounding area.

- 1.4 The site is within a parking permit area, adjacent to the Lancaster Canal which is designated open space, green space, cycle network and biological heritage site. The site is near a smoke control area and the outer zone 2 for air quality management, and forms part of a regeneration priority area for the broader Canal Quarter area. The site is at low risk of surface water flooding, with pockets of medium risk from future surface water flooding within the site, but beyond the areas sought for built development.

2.0 Proposal

- 2.1 This application seeks planning permission for the erection of a three-storey front link extension and to reorganise the existing internal arrangements for student accommodation bedrooms to student studio flats. The proposal would reduce the number of student accommodation bedrooms from 96 predominantly 10sq.m bedrooms in cluster flats, to just 62 en-suite student studio apartments measuring between 19sq.m and circa 28sq.m floorspace. The proposal seeks to remove 15 existing communal WCs, 18 communal bathrooms, and 11 communal kitchen/living space, replacing these with en-suite studio facilities and communal areas within a proposed front link extension.

- 2.2 The proposed extension contains a communal living area, a communal gym, meeting space, with communal WC by the entrance and within the gym. The proposed three-storey front link extension is to be finished in glazing and porcelain rainscreen, measuring circa 9.6 metres above external ground level, of slightly taller than the eaves the adjacent smaller Block 2, but subservient to the ridge height. The three storey element measures approximately 8.5 metres across the frontage and deep, joined to each of the existing Mill buildings by subservient and setback glazed links projecting circa 1.2 metres wide between the main extension and the existing building. Laundry and bike store to be provided within the existing smaller Mill, with fenced bin-store area in the existing carpark behind Block 2.

- 2.3 The proposal seeks a modest café building within the elevated walled grounds of the site adjacent to Lancaster Canal with the access gate onto the canal retained. This area of the site is externally accessible from Moor Lane, and would be accessible to proposed future residents via the proposed link extension. The proposed café measures just 5.4 metres wide by 2.7 metres deep, with a further 0.9 metres canopy under a circa 3 metres tall flat roof, finished in materials similar to the proposed link extension. The proposed café building would form a food preparation and sales area, with customer seating entirely external within the walled courtyard.

3.0 Site History

- 3.1 A number of relevant applications relating to this site have previously been received by the Local Planning Authority. These include:

Application Number	Proposal	Decision
25/00134/LB	Listed building application to facilitate the conversion from 96-bed into 62 one-bed self contained student accommodation units, erection of a three storey front extension linking the Mill and annexe and demolition of part of enclosure wall	Concurrent
23/00879/LB	Listed building application for the installation of replacement windows	Approved
23/01000/PRFORU	Pre-application advice request for remodelling of student accommodation block and extension	Advice Provided
22/00879/FUL	Change of use of 96-bed into 62 one-bed self contained student accommodation units, erection of a four storey front extension with roof terrace above linking the Mill and annexe and demolition of part of enclosure wall	Refused
22/00880/LB	Listed building application to facilitate the conversion from 96-bed into 62 one-bed self contained student	Refused

	accommodation units, erection of a four storey front extension with roof terrace above linking the Mill and annexe and demolition of part of enclosure wall	
21/00489/FUL	Erection of a two storey front extension linking Mill and annexe, reconfiguration layout from 96-bed into 62-bed ensuite student accommodation with associated facilities, and demolition of an enclosure wall	Refused
21/00490/LB	Listed building application for erection of a two storey front extension linking the Mill and annexe and reconfiguration of internal layout from 96-bed into 62-bed ensuite student accommodation, and demolition of an enclosure wall	Refused
07/00668/LB	Listed Building application for alterations and reinstatement of curtilage wall (following demolition of adjacent buildings)	Refused
07/00665/LB	Listed Building Application for alterations and reinstatement of northern elevation (following demolition of part of the adjacent Heron Chemical Works)	Refused
05/01340/FUL	Installation of laser data communication equipment on gable end at high level	Approved
05/01375/LB	Listed Building Application for installation of laser data communication equipment on gable end at high level	Approved
89/3017/LB	Formation of dormer roof to accommodate internal goods lift and ground floor windows and doors	Approved
87/01084/HST	Convert Mill To Student Accommodation	Approved
87/01085/HST002	Convert Mill To Student Accommodation	Approved
87/00896/HST	Demolition Of Old Mill Buildings	Approved

4.0 Consultation Responses

4.1 The following responses have been received from statutory and internal consultees:

Consultee	Response
Conservation Section	No objection , subject to amendments to proposed fencing, and subject to conditions to protect existing internal cast iron columns, details and samples of external materials of development, hard and soft landscaping and external lighting
Lancashire Archaeology	No objection , consider that any formal archaeological investigation or recording would not be justified for the present scheme
Historic England	No observation received
County Highways	No objection , no contributions sought, recommend planning condition regarding construction management plan
Environmental Health	No observation received
Engineering Team	No observation received
Lead Local Flood Authority	No objection , subject to planning conditions for a final surface water drainage scheme, construction drainage, maintenance and verification of drainage facilities
United Utilities	No adverse comment, recommend planning condition regarding foul and surface water drainage arrangements
Lancaster Canal Trust	No adverse comment, support the response and recommendation of Canal and River Trust
Canal And River Trust	No adverse comment, subject to planning conditions regarding risk and development method statement, construction management plan, drainage, no gates opening towards/across the towpath, external lighting, and an informative regarding requests for new access to the canal
Natural England	No observation received
Tree Officer	No objection , AIA incorporates best practice and guidance, works to T1 would require a separate tree works application to regularise
Fire Safety	No adverse comment, advice regarding emergency vehicle access and water provision
Lancashire	No observations received

Constabulary	
University Of Cumbria Accommodation	No observations received
LUSU Housing	No observations received
Lancaster University	No observations received
Lancaster Civic Vision	No adverse comment, although would seek the addition of rooftop solar panels. The design and materials are an improvement upon previous application, internal layout an improvement upon existing, and welcome the addition of an outdoor café.
Planning Policy Team	No observations received
Waste And Recycling	No observations received

4.2 The following responses have been received from members of the public:

- One **Objection**, due to growth in student housing development, and lack of local housing supply, additional student accommodation should be refused
- Two **Support**, due to sustainable and well-considered development, improving functionality of the building and community connections, whilst providing a welcome shift prioritises quality over quantity. Café will transform an underutilised space, provide facilities and improve social interaction, whilst providing a catalyst for wider Canal Quarter regeneration.

5.0 Analysis

5.1 The key considerations in the assessment of this application are:

- Principle of development
- Design, scale and streetscene impact upon heritage assets
- Residential amenity and security
- Energy efficiency, employment and skills
- Transport, parking, waste and air quality
- Ecology, contamination, drainage and impact upon the canal

5.2 **Principle of development** (Development Management DPD DM7: Purpose Built Accommodation for Students, Strategic Policies and Land Allocations DPD SP1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development, SP2: Lancaster District Settlement Hierarchy, SG4: Lancaster City Centre, SG5: Canal Quarter, Central Lancaster, EC5: Regeneration Priority Areas, Canal Quarter SPD, National Planning Policy Framework Section 2. Achieving sustainable development, Section 4. Decision-making, Section 5. Delivering a sufficient supply of homes, Section 6. Building a strong, competitive economy, Section 7. Ensuring the vitality of town centres)

5.2.1 The student accommodation use of the site has been long established, and whilst the demand for the recent accommodation type of cluster flats appears to have reduced over time, the principle of continuing the use of the site as student accommodation is considered acceptable. The proposal would result in the reduction in the number of bedrooms provided to meet the demand for larger en-suite studio apartments. Whilst the site would accommodate fewer students through the proposal, the site has had difficulty achieving high occupancy levels under the previous arrangement, understood to have been unoccupied for a number of years, until ground floor occupancy this last year. As such, the principle of the sought continued use of the site for student accommodation through this proposal is considered to be acceptable. The future full occupation of the site as student studio residential accommodation will assist with the provision of housing within the district, for which there is an acute need, and will enable the site to be utilised and support local economic growth.

5.2.2 Student accommodation comprises an important component of the district's housing market, and therefore contributes towards the Council's housing supply. Currently, the Council cannot demonstrate a 5-year land supply, with only 2 years supply of deliverable housing. The consequences of not having a 5-year housing supply means paragraph 11d of the NPPF is engaged ('the presumption in favour of sustainable development') unless policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance (including heritage impacts) provides a clear reason for refusing the development; or any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessment against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole. Whilst the proposal would accommodate fewer students, due to how housing supply is

calculated for cluster flats and studios, the proposal would modestly improve housing supply figures.

5.2.3 The site is within a regeneration priority area for Canal Quarter, which will be critical to enhancing Lancaster City Centre's role and function as a sub-regional centre to boost retail, cultural and leisure offers for residents and visitors. The mix of town centre uses in this area will include a range of retail, cultural, leisure, education, residential and employment uses. Proposals within this area should seek to complement and support the role and function of the existing uses within the city centre. Within this area, new buildings should integrate with old, seeking to repair and incorporate the existing fabric and retain buildings and features that are of historic importance, with development proposal of a high standards of design, effectively using the frontage to Lancaster Canal. These matters will be discussed in the following sections of this report, however the principle of the continued use as student accommodation would be consistent with the mixed town centre uses encouraged within Canal Quarter site, as student accommodation is directed towards the city centre through DM DPD Policy DM7. The principle of the proposal is considered to be acceptable and policy compliant. The provision of student studio residential accommodation, and the social and economic benefits associated with such development, weigh in favour of the proposal.

5.3 **Design, scale and streetscene impact upon heritage assets (Development Management DPD DM29: Key Design Principles, DM37: Development affecting Listed Buildings, DM38: Development affecting Conservation Areas, DM39: The Setting of Designated Heritage Assets, DM41: Development Affecting Non-Heritage Assets or their settings, Strategic Policies and Land Allocations DPD SG5: Canal Quarter, Central Lancaster, SP7: Maintaining Lancaster District's Unique Heritage, Canal Quarter SPD, National Planning Policy Framework Section 12. Achieving well-designed places, Section 16. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment, Listed Building and Conservation Areas Act 1990 Section 7, 17 Paragraph 72, 73**

5.3.1 In accordance with the Listed Building and Conservation Areas Act, when considering any application that affects a Listed building, a Conservation Area or their setting, the local planning authority must pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the heritage asset or its setting. This is reiterated by policies DM37 and DM38. DM38 sets out that development within Conservation Areas will only be permitted where it has been demonstrated that:

- Proposals respect the character of the surrounding built form and its wider setting in terms of design, siting, scale, massing, height and the materials used; and,
- Proposals will not result in the loss or alteration of features which contribute to the special character of the building and area; and,
- Proposed uses are sympathetic and appropriate to the character of the existing building and will not result in any detrimental impact on the visual amenity and wider setting of the Conservation Area.

5.3.2 The application site contains two Grade II Listed Buildings, making a strong positive contribution to the city scape and Conservation Area, particularly when viewed in the context of adjacent Grade II Listed Moor Lane Mill buildings and other non-designated heritage assets. The frontage to the 5-storey Mill building already contains a modest Doric porch, which is sought to be replaced by a 3-storey flat roof extension to the front, linking to the adjacent 3-storey Mill building (Block 2), both of which are nationally important heritage assets as listed buildings.

5.3.3 The proposal seeks internal alterations to facilitate a reorganisation of existing student cluster flats to student studio flats within the existing listed buildings. Given the original conversion to student accommodation, the interior works primarily affect modern alterations. Consequently, the proposal does not result in undue harm to the interiors of the listed buildings.

5.3.4 The area sought for development likely contained built form in this location, as shown on historic OS maps. A 3-storey building was present immediately south of the frontage of the 5-storey building up until the conversion to student accommodation in the late 1980's. From 1948 aerial photography, it is understood that this building previously linked the two remaining Mill buildings, within the location of the proposed development. Whilst this building (Mill 3) was demolished, part of this building had formed part of the original student conversion, with a link roof canopy between the three Mill buildings. However, this was demolished prior to conversion, and the link canopy was not implemented. Given the previous built form in this location and proximity of opposite historic mill buildings to Moor Lane, the siting of a link extension in this location may be suitable, subject to a

high-quality design and sympathetic proportions in this prominent location.

- 5.3.5 High quality design is vital for new developments in the historic environment. The vibrancy and richness of heritage assets strongly contributes to the cultural values of the district, the quality of which could be eroded through inappropriate or low-quality proposals. In certain circumstances, and with an understanding of the significance of heritage assets and their setting, high-quality contemporary and innovative design may be acceptable within the historic environment.
- 5.3.6 An application for development at this site has been before planning committee previously, for a larger (four storey) development, finished in a contemporary, but ultimately divisive, corten and glazing external materials, with a roof terrace atop. This earlier application was refused by the Planning Committee and considered a brutalist design, and materials which were unsympathetic to national heritage assets. The refusal of planning permission was ultimately upheld (dismissed) at planning appeal. Since the planning appeal, the scheme design and scale has evolved through a pre-application forum process involving elected members. The current proposal has taken account of this process and previous decisions and now seeks a smaller scale extension that remains contemporary in design, but avoids starkly contrasting materials from the surrounding national heritage assets.
- 5.3.7 The reduced height at three storeys tall, and lack of a rooftop terrace, not only makes this subservient to both attached Mill buildings, but also avoids adverse impact upon views towards Lancaster Castle from Moor Lane. The avoidance of a rooftop terrace should be controlled through planning condition preventing such use. The design remains flat roofed, with a large corner and link glazing features, with walls finished in porcelain rainscreen walls. The rainscreen and glazing are designed to offer verticality to the development, to tie with the verticality of the taller Mill buildings attached, despite the subservient height. The proposed design includes a contemporary corner glazing, which cascades upwards through increasing floorspace at higher floors. This glazing reduces the appearance of massing of the building, which will avoid a 'boxy' appearance when viewed in three dimensions, despite the flat roof and dimensions of the proposed extension. The design is considered to make a lighter appearance addition, further assisting with vertical emphasis, through thoughtful design detailing.
- 5.3.8 Whilst the porcelain rainscreen will contrast with the attached sandstone walled Mill buildings, this will assist in differentiating this as a modern addition, but in a fashion that synergises with the original buildings. Porcelain is made from earth sourced materials and can be finished in a colour and texture to compliment the existing mill buildings without matching these, but likely similar to the ashlar eaves detail of Mill Hall. The precise material, scale and orientation of panels for the rainscreen will all be critical details that should be controlled through planning conditions, to achieve verticality through narrow joints and controlling how these panels are to be hung. Similarly, the corner glazing feature, rainwater goods, and any other external features of the development will need to be controlled through planning conditions to ensure a high-quality clean and contemporary finish befitting of these listed buildings. Subject to agreeing such details through planning conditions, it is considered that the contemporary addition will appear subservient and appropriate to this sensitive heritage setting, offering a contrast from the existing Mills but tying to the verticality and repetition. The small café will be finished in similar materials to help this correspond to the new developments.
- 5.3.9 The site is sensitive as it occupies a highly prominent position within the conservation area. The development would be highly visible and will undoubtable affect the character and appearance of the area. However, it is considered that this would not be in a harmful way for the aforementioned reasons. Overall, the proposed development would be striking, but due to the contemporary design of extension use of sympathetic high quality materials, the proposal would not cause significant harm to heritage asset or the wider streetscene. Lancaster Civic Vision concluding this is a much-improved application showing much more respect and sensitivity to the original mill building. The proposal is considered to be high quality contemporary and innovative design, in appropriate materials, resulting in a neutral impact upon heritage assets. As concluded by the Conservation Officer, subject to final details and samples agreed through planning condition, it is considered that the development would have a neutral impact upon the listed buildings, the setting of the detached listed buildings and the Lancaster Conservation Area as a whole.
- 5.3.10 There are some public and heritage benefits to the proposal to balance against the neutral impacts of the development upon the listed buildings and conservation area. The refurbishment of the

building will encourage long-term maintenance of the heritage assets, through what is now considered to be the optimum viable use of the heritage assets. As such, the heritage impacts are considered to offer modest benefits from the re-use of the building for alternative student accommodation, consistent with the assets' conservation. The development is considered to comply with both local and national heritage planning policy.

5.4 **Residential amenity and security** (Development Management DPD DM29: Key Design Principles, Appendix G: Purpose Built Student Accommodation, Strategic Policies and Land Allocations DPD SG5: Canal Quarter, Central Lancaster, National Planning Policy Framework Section 8. Promoting healthy and safe communities)

5.4.1 Before the development commenced, the existing student accommodation was arranged in small cluster flats, where students predominantly occupied 10sq.m bedrooms. These were almost half the size of those proposed. These flats had separate communal bathrooms and two shared living/kitchen areas shared with 15 other occupants per floor. The proposed studio apartments, with ensuite bathrooms, private sleeping and living space, in addition to multiple communal areas within the proposed extension, would exceed the previous standards of residential amenity.

5.4.2 Each proposed studio within the proposal exceeds 19sq.m. Whilst none of these studios meet nationally described space standards, the studio apartments are policy compliant with DM DPD Policy DM7 and Appendix G. These units are considered to provide acceptable amenity standards for such student occupation, subject to a planning condition to ensure full-time student occupation only. All rooms benefit from windows with suitable natural light and outlook, with en-suite bathrooms directed centrally within the building to maximise use of existing openings, resulting in most studios benefitting from multiple windows. Fewer rooms are provided within the roof form fifth floor, ensuring suitable floorspace accounting for lower ceiling heights and outlook from relatively low rooflights (glazed circa 1.6 metres above finished floor level). The proposal is acceptable in terms of residential amenity to future occupants.

5.4.3 The proposed use is for a less intensive student accommodation use than the most recent use of the site, given that this would provide 62 units of accommodation in comparison to 96 bedrooms previously. The proposed extension would potentially introduce noise during construction. However, given the location adjacent to a busy road on the edge of the city centre, combined with the nearest existing dwellinghouse being separated by over 40 metres from the extension, it is considered that the limited duration construction activity would cause no undue harm to neighbouring residential amenity, subject to a construction management plan.

5.4.4 Once operative, the communal areas within the proposed extension and from the proposed external café area could potentially generate noise, at a time when sensitive receptors would be introduced within the development itself, in addition to existing neighbours circa 40 metres from the development. However, given the existing background noise within the locality, combined with a planning condition to ensure noise management measures for the proposed external café use, the proposal is considered to be acceptable in residential amenity terms, resulting in no undue harm.

5.4.5 Lancashire Constabulary consultation response to the previous application recommended bollards, which have been incorporated into the proposed site plan. Details of such security measures could be controlled through planning condition. The open space to the east of the Mill and west of the canal is secured by fencing and gate access, which is to form the proposed café area. Management and security of this area can also be controlled through planning condition. Similarly, security details of surveillance, landscaping, lighting, window opening restrictions and other security measures could be adequately controlled through planning condition to ensure suitable security for the proposed development and use.

5.5 **Energy efficiency, employment and skills** (Development Management DPD DM28: Employment and Skills Plans, DM30: Sustainable Design, Strategic Policies and Land Allocations DPD SG5: Canal Quarter, Central Lancaster, PAN09: Energy Efficiency in New Development)

5.5.1 The proposed conversion has positive impacts in terms of embodied carbon, reusing and extending the existing built form to meet modern requirements. This approach ensures that the built form is retained and maintained, largely avoiding the energy and carbon impacts of new materials and construction activities that new construction requires. The submitted energy statement includes the

suggestion of some energy efficiency measures within the existing mill built form and extension. The new build element is far less constrained in terms of sustainable design measures, and provides greater opportunity to deliver high standards of sustainable design.

- 5.5.2 Whilst precise sustainable design details are unavailable at this stage, the information received regarding energy efficiency includes a commitment to exceeding the minimum requirements of building control by at least 5%. The submitted energy statement provides a number of suggested methods to achieving this, such as mechanical ventilation, heat pumps, solar gain and insulation. Whilst this is presented as a minimum target, this does not achieve the policy requirement for conversions to achieve the lowest practical level of energy demand through efficiency measures, including exploring heating and cooling and on-site renewable. Whilst the current information falls short of the policy requirement in the recently adopted partially review Local Plan, in this case such details can be controlled through planning condition. Such a condition can ensure the development meets the requirements of policy CC1 and DM30a, b and c. Subject to suitable mitigation through planning condition, the sustainability and energy credentials of the development will accord with policy.
- 5.5.3 The proposed development triggers the requirement for an Employment Skills Plan. This is because the development results in an increase in residential units (despite a reduction in bedroom numbers overall) by a reduction in student cluster flats and an increase in student studio accommodation. This policy requirement is to support local people secure experience and upskilling in the construction and design sector and can be controlled through planning condition in order to comply with policy DM28.
- 5.6 **Transport, parking, waste and air quality** (Development Management DPD DM29: Key Design Principles, DM61: Walking and Cycling, DM62: Vehicle Parking Provision, Appendix E: Car Parking Standards, Strategic Policies and Land Allocations DPD SG5: Canal Quarter, Central Lancaster, T2: Cycling and Walking Network, EN9: Air Quality Management Areas, PAN01: Waste Storage and Collection Guidance for Domestic and Commercial Developments, PAN08: Cycling and Walking, National Planning Policy Framework Section 9. Promoting sustainable transport)
- 5.6.1 The site benefits from an unmarked cobbled parking area within an existing walled courtyard, providing off-street parking as existing. The proposal seeks a fenced bin store within this courtyard, within a space that would struggle to accommodate more than one additional car, with the remaining area providing usable and accessible parking space for approximately 7 vehicles. Given the student accommodation use sought, sustainable city centre location, and principally that the site most recently accommodated more student bedrooms than proposed through this application, this is considered to be sufficient car parking provision for the proposal.
- 5.6.2 Suitable mitigation is available through the bike storage provision of over 22sq.m, and final details of how sufficient parking provision would be provided within this secure internal space can be controlled through planning condition. Promoting the role of cycling and walking is one of the requirements for development within the Canal Quarter area, and such a condition will ensure this is encourage through secure facilities as part of the development. A planning condition would be required for a construction management plan to ensure this phase of development does not detrimentally harm the highway network in this city centre location. Subject to such planning conditions, it is considered that the proposal would cause no undue harm to the public highway.
- 5.6.3 The proposed site plan details a secure refuse storage of 12.85sq.m external floorspace contained by fencing, located in an accessible are for residents and circa 12.5 metres from the public highway for collection. This area is largely visually contained from public perspective due to the location within the courtyard. Subject to details of scale, materials and security of the enclosure, it is considered that the proposal can deliver suitable waste and recycling arrangements through visually contained refuse stores on-site.
- 5.6.4 The site provides residential accommodation within the outer zone 2 beyond the Lancaster gyratory Air Quality Management Area. Given that the proposed residential use is less intensive than the existing arrangement, the proposal would result in no undue harm with regards to air quality. A modest but suitable scale laundry is proposed within the smaller existing mill building. Subject to further details of these facilities and extraction equipment, this is considered to be acceptable to meet the needs of future occupants, who are unlikely to have such laundry facilities within relatively

modest studio spaces.

- 5.7 **Ecology, drainage and contamination** (Development Management DPD DM34: Surface Water Runoff and Sustainable Drainage, DM29: Key Design Principles, DM32: Contaminated Land, Strategic Policies and Land Allocations DPD SG5: Canal Quarter, Central Lancaster, EN7: Environmentally Important Areas, National Planning Policy Framework Section 14. Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change, Section 15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment)
- 5.7.1 The application site is within the impact risk buffer zone of the Morecambe Bay and its environmental designations, and immediately adjacent to the Lancaster Canal Biological Heritage site. As the proposal would result in a less intensive residential use of the site compared to the existing arrangement, there would be no additional recreational pressure on Morecambe Bay, and no undue impact upon the environmental designations of the Bay.
- 5.7.2 Despite the proximity to Lancaster Canal, the external development does not include works to the roofs of the existing mill buildings. The existing development area is currently flagstone with a small roadside bush, considered to be of negligible ecology value. The development is considered to be minimis in Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) terms, and as such no mandatory net gain is required, as development carried out in accordance with the submitted arboricultural details will avoid adverse impact upon trees on-site. Enhancements in ecology can be provided through more substantive planting to the roadside, as indicated on the proposed site plan and visualisations, with full details controlled through a landscaping planning condition. Subject to such planning conditions, in addition to a scheme to control any external lighting of the development, the proposal is considered to cause no undue harm to the environment or protected species, delivering a modest enhancement to ecology through landscaping.
- 5.7.3 The site is in close proximity to Lancaster Canal. A construction environmental management plan should be controlled through planning condition to reduce impacts upon the canal during construction. The proposal seeks a café area to the north of the mill buildings, closer to the canal. The Canal and River Trust have requested details of the likely impact of the café developments upon the structural integrity of the canal, with particular concern regarding foundations. The nature of the café development, and details of foundation (if any), could be controlled through planning condition, with further details of structural impacts upon retaining features controlled through such a condition, depending on the construction details. Whilst there are limited details regarding direct access to the café area from the canal, subject to no gates opening outwards towards the canal and towpath, this should avoid adverse impact, again controllable through planning condition. Subject to these measures, the proposal would have no undue impact upon the Lancaster Canal open space designations.
- 5.7.4 A Surface Water Drainage Strategy has been submitted with this application, surveying the condition of existing surface water manholes within the site and directing to the adjacent combined sewer, and detailing some remediation works to ensure this provides a suitable outfall of surface water from existing buildings on site. A cellular tank is sought to control runoff from the new extension, before connecting to the existing surface water manhole within the site. Given the largely hardsurfaced site, proximity to the existing surface water manhole within the site, it is considered that the proposal can deliver acceptable drainage arrangements. The final details of a final surface water sustainable drainage strategy and remedial works should be controlled through planning conditions, in addition to verification and maintenance of these upon installation. The Lead Local Flood Authority have raised no objection to the proposal subject to such a planning condition.
- 5.7.5 The two existing mill buildings have been recently occupied for decades by students, and works to these buildings are considered safe for construction workers and future occupants. The proposed link extension, and potentially the café building, would break ground between the mills, in the location of a demolished mill building. However, given the previous works to the site and no objection or recommended conditions from Environmental Health to the previous proposals at the site (and no response to this application), it is considered that the risk of contamination can be proportionately controlled through an unforeseen contamination planning condition.

6.0 Conclusion and Planning Balance

- 6.1 The proposal for the refurbishment and alteration of existing student accommodation to form higher standard studio student apartments is considered to be policy compliant in principle. The proposal aligns with the aims of the Canal Quarter Area, bringing regeneration to this important city centre site. Whilst resulting in fewer bedrooms, as student accommodation for cluster flats is calculated on a basis of 3 bedrooms equating to one housing units, and student studio accommodation is considered to be one housing unit in itself, the proposal would make a modest contribution to meeting the districts housing needs. The proposal would achieve social and economic benefits from the development, which are afforded moderate weight.
- 6.2 Importantly, through high-quality contemporary design, massing and materials are considered sympathetic to the Mills and surrounding area. The proposal would make a bold impact, but one that is considered to be neutral impact upon heritage assets, subject to planning conditions ensuring suitably high-quality details and samples. Surface water drainage, sustainable design and travel, highway impacts, ecology and noise can all be controlled and appropriately mitigated through planning conditions. Subject to such conditions, this will ensure these matters are also neutral in planning balance. As such, and on balance, it is considered that there are no adverse impacts identified that would significantly or demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposal.

Recommendation

That Planning Permission **BE GRANTED** subject to the following conditions:

Condition no.	Description	Type
1	Development in accordance with the amended approved plans	Control
2	Energy efficiency measures	Prior to further development commencing
3	Employment Skills Plan (ESP)	Prior to further development commencing
4	Construction environmental management plan	Prior to commencement of extension
5	Surface water drainage strategy	Prior to commencement of extension
6	Details and samples of external materials and boundary treatments	Prior to above ground development
7	Surface water drainage implementation and verification details	Prior to completion or occupation
8	Surface water drainage management and maintenance details	Prior to completion or occupation
9	Details of guttering and flues/extraction	Prior to installation and occupation
10	Extension and facilities to be built prior to further occupation	Prior to further occupation
11	Lighting details	Prior to installation and occupation
12	Details of bin, bike and laundry facilities	Prior to installation and occupation
13	Security measures, including details of bollards and boundary treatments	Prior to completion or occupation
14	Landscaping details	Prior to completion or occupation
15	Details of construction method and foundations (if any) of café, and weights/load of development for structural integrity	Prior to café development and first use
16	Noise management café	Prior to café

		development and first use
17	Details of canal access, including details of surfacing and gate, gate to inward open only	Prior to installation of canal access
18	Accord with submitted Arboricultural Impact Assessment	Control
19	Unforeseen contamination	Control
20	Restriction to student accommodation	Control
21	Rooftop not enclosed, used as sitting out nor accessible to future residents	Control

Article 35, Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015

In accordance with the above legislation, Officers have made the recommendation in a positive and proactive way to foster the delivery of sustainable development, working proactively with the applicant to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. The recommendation has been made having had regard to the impact of development, and in particular to the relevant policies contained in the Development Plan, as presented in full in the officer report, and to all relevant material planning considerations, including the National Planning Policy Framework, National Planning Practice Guidance and relevant Supplementary Planning Documents/ Guidance.

Background Papers

None